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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 665

RTID 0648-XA441

Pacific Island Fisheries; 2020 U.S. Territorial Longline

Bigeye Tuna Catch Limits for American Samoa

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Announcement of a valid specified fishing agreement.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces a valid specified fishing agreement that allocates up to 1,000 metric tons (t) of the 2020 bigeye tuna limit for American Samoa to U.S. longline fishing vessels. The agreement supports the long-term sustainability of fishery resources of the U.S. Pacific Islands, and fisheries development in American Samoa.

DATES: The specified fishing agreement was valid as of August 25, 2020. The start date for attributing 2020 bigeye tuna catch to American Samoa was September 6, 2020.

ADDRESSES: The Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific (FEP) describes specified fishing agreements and is available from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), 1164 Bishop St.,

Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, tel 808-522-8220, fax 808-522-8226, or <http://www.wpcouncil.org>.

NMFS prepared environmental analyses that describe the potential impacts on the human environment that would result from the action. The analyses, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2020-0120, are available from <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2020-0120>, or from Michael D. Tosatto, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), 1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lynn Rassel, NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries, 808-725-5184.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a final rule published on August 19, 2020, NMFS specified a 2020 limit of 2,000 t of longline-caught bigeye tuna for the U.S. Pacific Island territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (85 FR 50961). NMFS allows each territory to allocate up to 1,500 t of the 2,000 t limit to U.S. longline fishing vessels identified in a valid specified fishing agreement, but the overall allocation limit among all territories may not exceed 3,000 t.

On August 21, 2020, NMFS received from the Council a specified fishing agreement between the American Samoa and

the Hawaii Longline Association. The Council's Executive Director advised that the specified fishing agreement was consistent with the criteria set forth in 50 CFR 665.819(c)(1). On August 25, 2020, NMFS reviewed the agreement and determined that it is consistent with the Pelagic FEP, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, implementing regulations, and other applicable laws.

In accordance with 50 CFR 300.224(d) and 50 CFR 665.819(c)(9), vessels in the agreement may retain and land bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean under American Samoa attribution specified in the fishing agreement. On September 6, 2020, NMFS began attributing bigeye tuna caught by vessels in the agreement to American Samoa. If NMFS determines that the fishery will reach the 1,000 t allocation specified in the agreement, we will restrict the retention of bigeye tuna caught by vessels in the agreement, unless the vessels are included in a

subsequent specified fishing agreement with another U.S. territory.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: September 3, 2020

Jennifer M. Wallace,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.